

Habitat: Golden Bishops are birds of grassland, favouring tall grass standing in water for nest sites. They are also often seen in cultivated areas, which would explain their occurrence in vegetation types such as Moist Woodland. They are absent from areas without permanent surface water and where ephemeral wetlands develop only rarely in the wet season, such as most of the Kalahari.

Movements: The mid- to late-summer peak in reporting rates is due to the easy recognition of birds in breeding plumage. However, in many areas they do appear suddenly and breed after rain, and disappear during drought, suggesting nomadism (Skead 1956; Irwin 1981; Brewster 1996; pers. obs). This warrants further study.

Breeding: Most records fell in the months November–February. Egg-laying in Zimbabwe occurs December–March, mainly January–March (Irwin 1981), and in the Transvaal December–May, mainly December–March (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b).

Interspecific relationships: They regularly flock and roost with other ploceids, particularly with Red Bishops *E. orix*. Nesting in close association with other species is less usual, but Red and Golden Bishops are sometimes found in mixed colonies (e.g. Grobler 1985).

Historical distribution and conservation: At many localities Golden Bishops are recorded irregularly (Irwin 1981) and there is no evidence that the situation was different in the past. Their use of croplands suggests that they may have benefited from crop farming. They are locally common, but a nomadic lifestyle makes it difficult to track population trends. They are widespread in suitable habitat and not deliberately persecuted.

A.J.F.K. Craig

Golden Bishop

Goudgeelvink

Euplectes afer

The smallest of the southern African bishops and widows, the Golden Bishop is most often encountered on the high central plateau of South Africa and is rarely reported near the coast. From the interior of the eastern Cape Province it occurs northwards through the Free State, Transkei, KwaZulu-Natal and the Transvaal to eastern Botswana. There were widely scattered records from Zimbabwe where the species is common only in the far west. Some of the records from Mashonaland, where it occurs irregularly, may have been misidentifications of the Yellow-rumped Widow *E. capensis* (A.J. Tree pers. comm.). The Golden Bishop is also found in northern Botswana and in the Caprivi area, with many records from northern Namibia. It occurs only in the lowlands of Lesotho (Bonde 1993), and is sparsely distributed in the interior of southern Mozambique (Clancey 1971c). Beyond southern Africa it may be found in open habitats throughout eastern, central and western Africa, south of the Sahara (Hall & Moreau 1970).

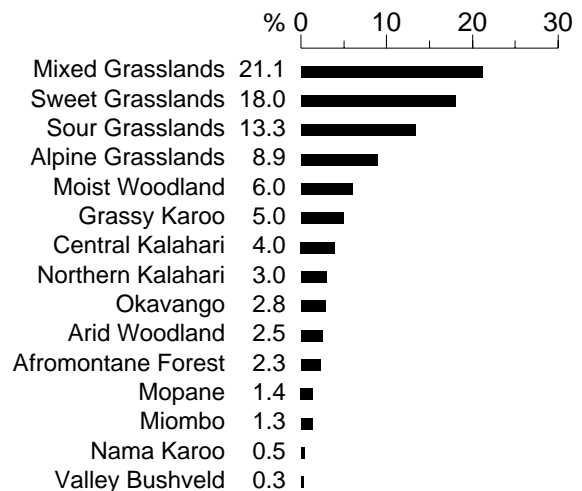
Male Golden Bishops can be confused with Yellow-rumped Widows. Apart from their smaller size, birds in nonbreeding dress are not easily distinguished from the 'browns' of other *Euplectes* species, and birds in nonbreeding plumage are easily overlooked and misidentified.

Recorded in 891 grid cells, 19.6%

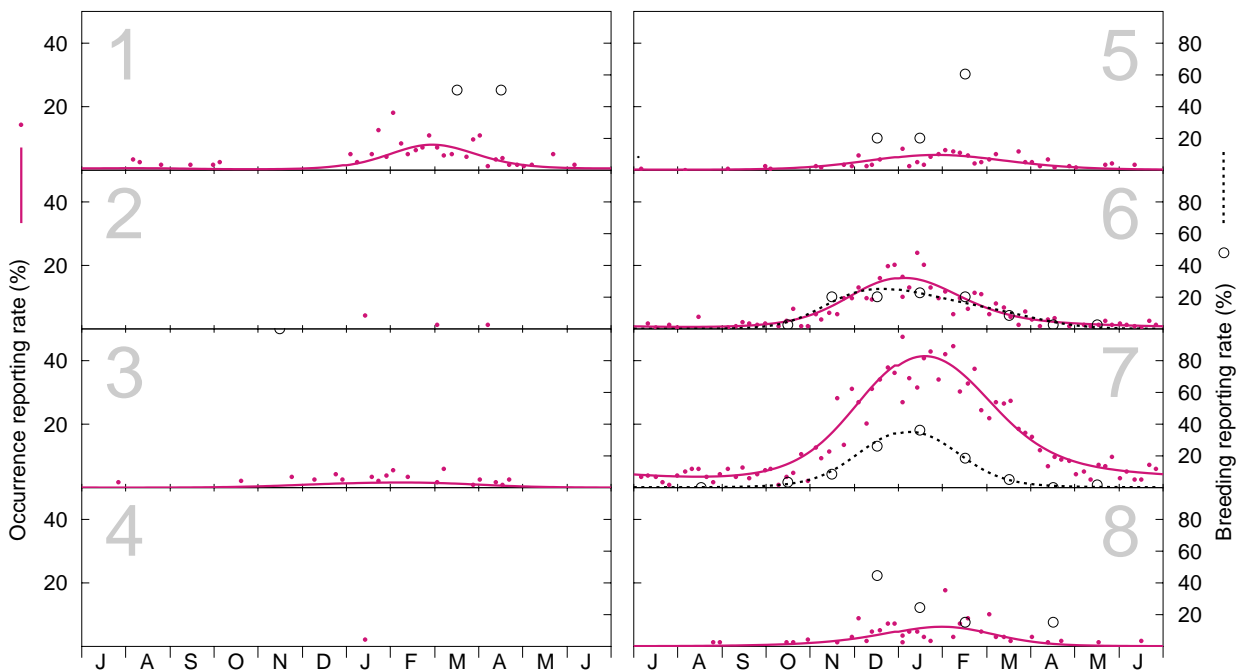
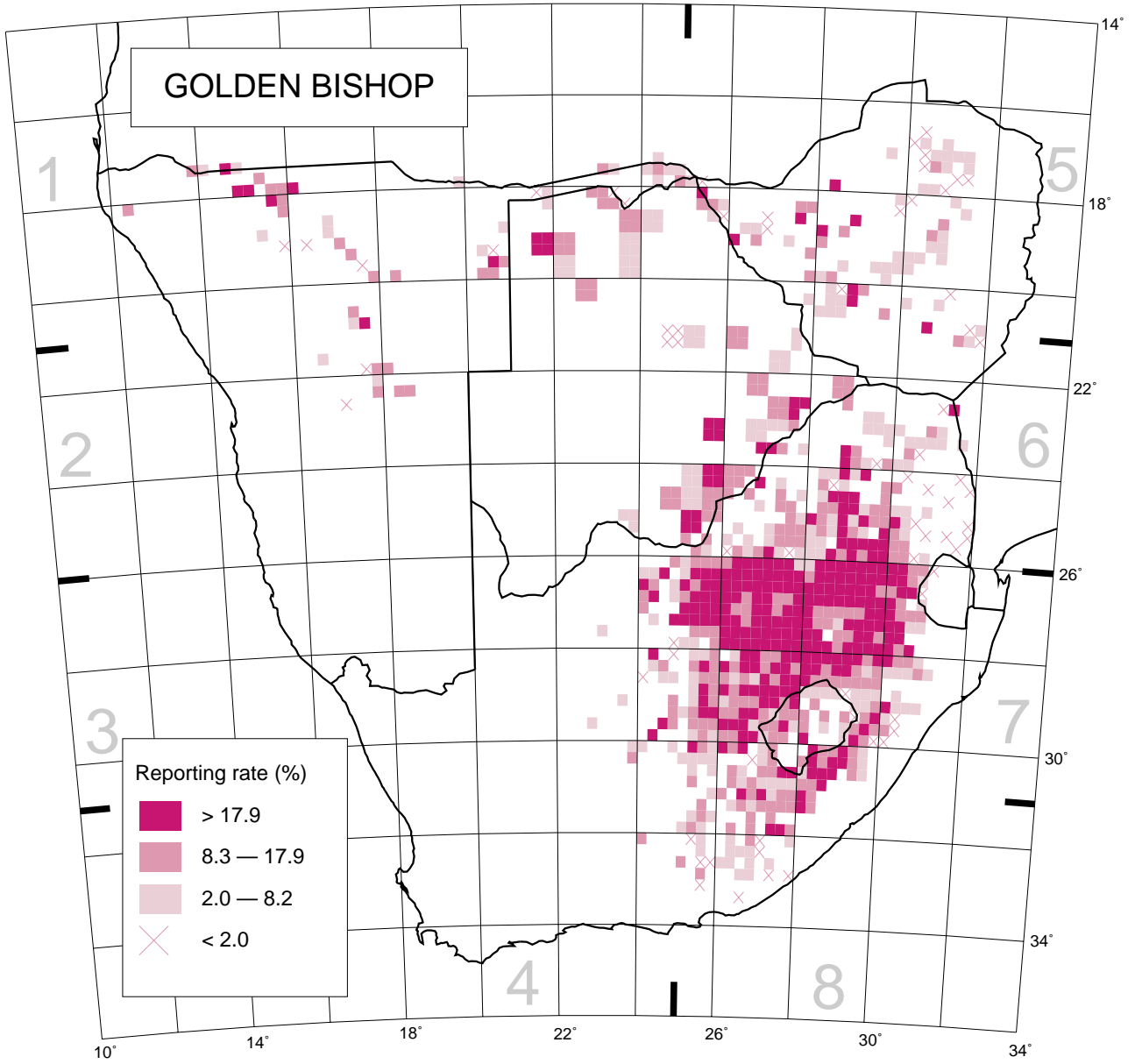
Total number of records: 8562

Mean reporting rate for range: 13.8%

Reporting rates for vegetation types



Also marginally in East Coast Littoral.



Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 68, 4, 31, 2, 140, 575, 3105, 98; Breeding: 2, 0, 1, 0, 5, 35, 238, 20.